

Rising Star: Dr. Mohamed Osman

My Journey as a Clinician Scientist

As a PhD-trained rheumatologist and clinician scientist with an active clinical practice, I am passionate and committed to delving into research questions that could be life-changing for my patients. In my view, research is a pivotal tool that can be used to derive solutions to the unfortunate complex health problems faced by my patients. I am particularly interested in studying systemic sclerosis (SSc, scleroderma) — a systemic autoimmune rheumatic disease that is associated with the worst outcomes and quality of life among all rheumatic diseases. My research is primarily focused on better understanding the grave challenges for patients with SSc through research so that I can treat them more effectively, improve their quality of life, and ultimately find a cure for their disease.

This passion for research started early in my career. I have always loved the bench, as it allowed me to utilize my creativity and explore the “why”. I initially honed my skills at the bench with formal research training during my undergraduate degree (Dalhousie University), PhD (University of Alberta), and post-doctoral fellowship (University of Alberta). I complemented my experiences at the bench by developing a deeper appreciation for various clinical research approaches during residency.

Alongside my integral research training, I have also had the benefit of invaluable mentorship over the years, both in research and patient care, which in turn has helped inform me on how to coach my mentees over the years. I have had both traditional mentors, but also individuals who truly sponsored me in various stages of my career. Certain individuals were instrumental in my journey as a rheumatologist/clinician scientist. One such example was Dr. Elaine Yacyshyn’s passion for patient care and teaching which inspired me to pursue a career as a rheumatologist. She led me to my post-doctoral fellow mentor, Dr. Evangelos Miche-



lakis, a seasoned clinician-scientist who was essential in helping me simplify and articulate complex concepts into clear testable ideas. He also inspired me to learn more about SSc, and to challenge current accepted paradigms related to the disease. I am also grateful to Dr. Jan Willem Cohen Tervaert who believed in my abilities as a researcher as my Divisional Director, but also sponsored me to pursue advanced training in SSc. Further, Dr. Robert Gniadecki (an experienced clinician scientist) has been an effective

sounding board for discussion of my ideas. In addition to having supportive mentors, I am very fortunate to have support for my research through various funding organizations (e.g. Scleroderma Canada, the Arthritis Society, CIHR) and I am also truly lucky to be surrounded and supported by my astute colleagues at the University of Alberta (particularly in the Division of Rheumatology). Finally, I am very blessed to have the overarching support of my wife, Wassila, my two children, my friends, and my family.

In all, I have been privileged to have been afforded entry into the world of research. Despite its vast potential, in my short tenure as a clinical scientist, I have also come to accept that research is challenging and not without failings and rejection. However, I have also come to accept that this is part of the continual learning process it is embedded in, and it has not dissuaded me. Rather, it has strengthened my resolve to continue my research, as the ultimate goal remains to help the patients I can if I can.

*Mohamed Osman (MO), MD, PhD, FRCPC,
Assistant Professor, Rheumatologist and Immunologist,
Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry
University Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta*